Athlon Sports

PRESENTS

LEBRON

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PHENOM
SUPERSTAR
LEGEND

HOW LEBRON JAMES RESHAPED
THE NBA, SUSTAINING
GREATNESS ACROSS ERAS

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Spectrum
TOYOTA
Spectrum
WELLS FARGO

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PRESENTS

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JAMES
23
TOSHIBA

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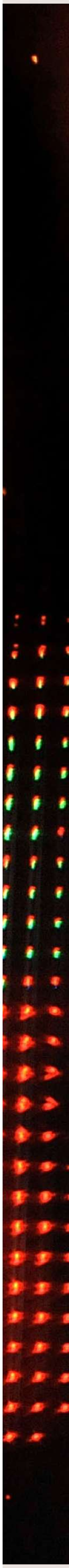


LeBron James greets fans as he's introduced during a welcome party at American Airlines Arena in Miami, Florida, on July 9, 2010.

INTRODUCTION

KING JAMES

LEBRON JAMES HAS LIVED several basketball lives, each one saddled with heavy expectations. The fact that James has always carried that weight on his shoulders—and succeeded—is a testament to his greatness.

He was born Dec. 30, 1984, in Akron, Ohio, to a teenage single mother. Raised amidst financial uncertainty, his first test had nothing to do with sports and everything to do with survival.

Basketball became both refuge and responsibility. By the time LeBron arrived at St. Vincent–St. Mary High School, he wasn't just a prodigy—he was a national curiosity, a teenager on the cover of magazines declaring him a legend in the making even though he was still a kid.

This tension between promise and pressure never eased. Drafted first overall by the Cleveland Cavaliers in June 2003, James entered the NBA as a savior for his hometown team and played like one immediately, winning Rookie of the Year and dragging undermanned rosters into relevance.

Yet early playoff exits in Cleveland exposed the limits of his brilliance. His move to the Miami Heat in the summer of 2010 was messy and polarizing. In Miami, he refined his game and developed discipline, winning back-to-back championships and adding two more league MVP awards to the two he'd won in Cleveland.

But James never forgot Cleveland and how fans in Ohio were counting on him to make the Cavs champs. His 2014 return ushered in the most demanding stretch of his career: another four straight NBA Finals appearances (after the four he'd had with Miami) and the task of delivering a title to a city defined by near-misses. His breakthrough in 2016—earned by a historic comeback from a 3–1 Finals deficit—remains a defining achievement in NBA history.

Then James raised the stakes again. He joined the Lakers in 2018, won another title in 2020, and in 2023, surpassed Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as the NBA's all-time leading scorer.

Incredibly, James isn't done. He's a successful businessman, a humanitarian, a father, and a future Hall of Famer who has redefined the standards of excellence. This is the story of LeBron James: the athlete who was expected to do it all, and who somehow did just that.

LeBron James goes to the basket in a game against the Grizzlies at FedExForum in Memphis on April 12, 2024.

YOUNG UPSTART
LeBron James (#23) plays in the Jordan Capital Classic at the MCI Center in Washington, D.C., on April 17, 2003. A high schooler at the time, James was mere months from being drafted first overall by the Cleveland Caveliers and fulfilling his promise as a basketball phenomenon.

95.5 FM
CAPITAL CLASSIC
15

TICKETS ON SALE NOW
CLEVE
KRSTIC
NETS
15
NETS
30

INDIVIDUAL PLAYOFF TICKETS ON SALE NOW
Work Hard.
Fly Right.
ntal Airlines
al Airlines
NETS

TALENT SHOW
New Jersey Nets center Nenad Krstić attempts to block LeBron's shot as the Cleveland forward drives to the hoop during the first half of a match-up in East Rutherford, New Jersey, on April 8, 2006. It was James' third season with the Cavaliers.

SWEET VICTORY
On June 21, 2012, the Miami Heat defeated the Oklahoma City Thunder in Game 5 of the NBA Finals, giving James his first NBA championship title—an achievement that had eluded the superstar up until that point. The cherry on top: The small forward was named Finals MVP.

CHAMPIONS
2012 CHAMPIONS

London
USA
6
NIGERIA
4
4
NIGERIA
7
7

NIGERIA
14
14
NIGERIA
Inspire a generation

GOLDEN TOUCH Playing for Team USA, James (#6) goes in for a dunk against players from Nigeria during a preliminary round match-up on Aug. 2, 2012, at the London Olympics. The U.S. men's basketball team went on to win it all, giving James his second gold medal. He'd win a third at Paris 2024.

LIKE FATHER

James and his eldest child, LeBron James Jr.—aka Bronny—appear at the Los Angeles Lakers media day on Sept. 30, 2024. They made NBA history as the first father-son pair to play together, first on Oct. 6, 2024, in a preseason game against Phoenix, then in the Lakers' season opener on Oct. 22.

JAMES
23
4
3

CHAPTER I

LEBRON JAMES HAS ALWAYS STOOD IN THE SPOTLIGHT

THE CHOSEN ONE

LeBron James, the St. Vincent–St. Mary High School basketball phenom, met all expectations when he was selected first overall in the NBA Draft in 2003.

NBA

P

PICTURE A 9-YEAR-OLD BOY playing football in a parking lot, trying to make himself smaller. LeBron James, already as tall as his mother, dipped his knees and slouched his shoulders in the huddle. When his coach, Bruce Kelker, asked young LeBron what he was doing, he heard an honest answer: “Trying to blend in.”

“You ain’t ever going to blend in,” Keller told LeBron. “And that can be a good thing.”

Before LeBron Raymone James was ever anointed “The Chosen One” by *Sports Illustrated* at 17, he was just “Bron Bron”—a kid sketching Dallas Cowboys and Los Angeles Lakers logos into notebooks while bouncing between apartments across Akron, Ohio.

Born to 16-year-old Gloria James, he grew up with virtually no contact with his biological father. Between the ages of 5 and 8, Gloria moved with her son 12 times.

James watches from the bench as his high school plays R.J. Reynolds High School in Greensboro, N.C., on Jan. 15, 2003.

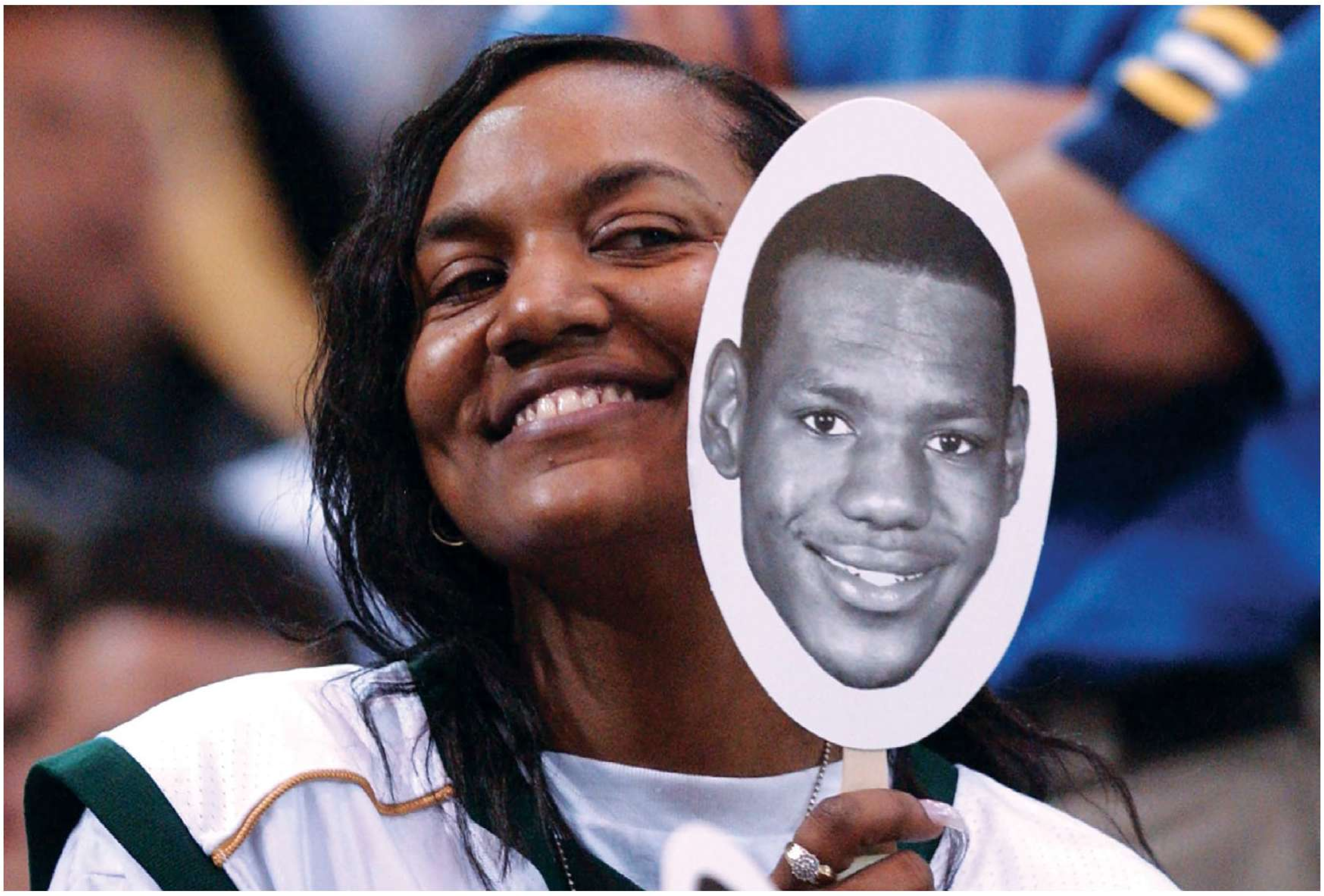
IRISH
23
DEMONS
SPALDING
TF-1000

The instability peaked in 1993. During fourth grade, James is thought to have moved half a dozen times and missed nearly 100 days of school. He spent his days immersed in video games, shuttling between apartments and a corner store where food stamps paid for snacks.

Everything changed when Kelker pulled into a housing project looking for football players. After a footrace that James won by 15 yards, Kelker invited him to join the East Dragons. LeBron took his first handoff 80 yards to the end zone. He scored 17 touchdowns that season, with his mom racing down the sideline alongside him for each one.

After two weeks, Kelker invited James to live with him. Several months later, another coach named Frank Walker offered James a place with his family in suburban Akron. The Walkers provided James his first experience with what he would later call “a real family.” Frank worked at the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority. James shared a room with his son, Frankie Walker Jr.

It was Frank who first signed LeBron up for basketball. He also taught him how to dribble and shoot lefthanded layups, and enlisted him as an assistant coach for younger kids. Away from sports, the Walkers enrolled James at



James (#23, left) navigates around a rival player from R.J. Reynolds High School in a match-up at Greensboro Coliseum on Jan. 15, 2003.

James’ mother, Gloria (above), supports her son during his game against Mater Dei High School at UCLA on Jan. 4, 2003.

Portage Path Elementary. He never missed another day of school that year.

As a child, James dominated as a wide receiver in football. He also grew to six feet tall by eighth grade, helping him achieve standout status during Sunday night basketball games at the Shaw Jewish Community Center in Akron.

By the time James arrived at St. Vincent–St. Mary High School as a freshman in 1999, joining teammates Sian Cotton, Dru Joyce III, and Willie McGee from their AAU team, the Northeast Ohio Shooting Stars, he was ready to shine. The group chose to enroll at the private Catholic school as a unit, which stirred controversy. Together, they were too good—and James was the superstar.

His freshman campaign delivered a perfect 27–0 record and a Division III state championship. James averaged 18 points per game and led the team in rebounds and assists. Sophomore year brought 25 points per game, another state title, and history: James became the first sophomore named to *USA Today*'s first-team All-American roster.

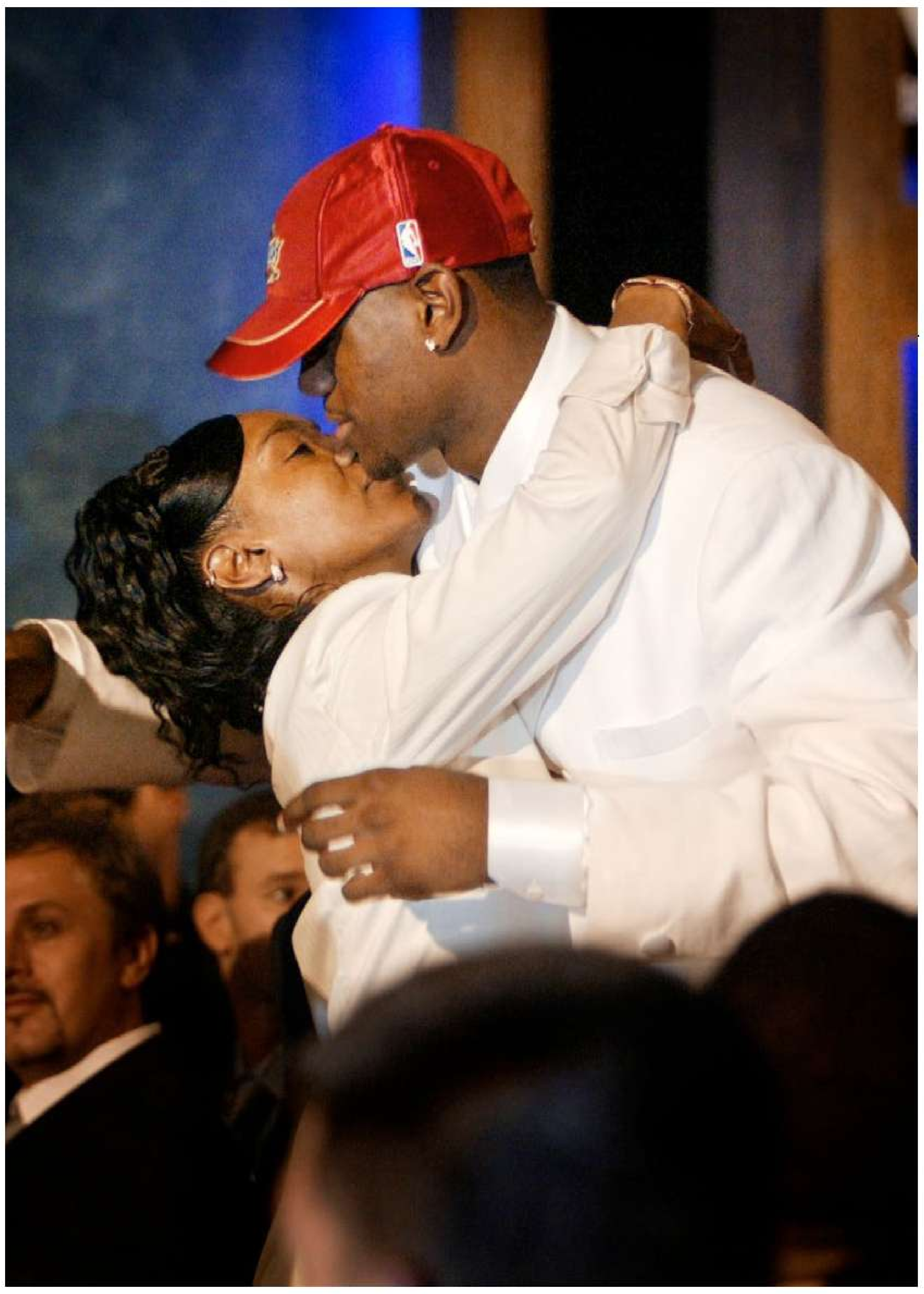
Junior year was when everything exploded. His scoring average jumped to nearly 30 points per game. Gatorade made him the first junior to win National Player of the Year. And *Sports Illustrated* put him on its cover.

The media was already declaring James the second coming of Michael Jordan. LeBron considered skipping his senior season to jump straight to the NBA, but the league prohibits drafting players directly out of high school. He decided not to challenge the NBA, staying in school, waiting for his turn on the biggest stage.

Senior year tested James differently. LeBron accepted two throwback jerseys valued at $845, triggering a brief suspension that cemented his decision to enter the NBA draft directly. He finished his high-school career with three state championships in four years and consensus recognition as National High School Player of the Year in his final scholastic season. He also was named MVP of the McDonald's All-American Game.

On June 26, 2003, the Cleveland Cavaliers made 18-year-old LeBron the first overall selection in the NBA Draft. He'd already signed an unprecedented $90 million endorsement contract with Nike. And in his first professional game, with all eyes on him, he scored 25 points with nine assists, six rebounds, and four steals.

James never looked back. But he never forgot where he came from, either. An instant NBA superstar, LeBron remained the local kid who learned grit and determination the hard way on the streets and playgrounds of Akron.



Gloria (above) gives her son a hug after Cleveland made the 18-year-old James the first overall selection in the NBA Draft on June 26, 2003.

James (right) grabs the ball as players from R.J. Reynolds High School surround him during a game on Jan. 15, 2003.

CLASSICS
Greensboro Coliseum Complex
109
108
REYNOLDS
50
IRISH
23
20
DEMONS

CHAPTER 2

THE CLEVELAND YEARS
2003–2010

THE LEGEND BEGINS

Officially a Cleveland Cavalier, LeBron James plays in his first NBA season against the Washington Wizards at the MCI Center in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 19, 2003.

CLEVELAND
23
CLEVELAND
32
CLEVELAND
20
BOBCATS

THE BASKETBALL SAILED past the rim, past the backboard, straight out of play. Two seconds remained in LeBron James' NBA debut, and his three-point attempt was an air ball.

It didn't matter that James scored 25 points that night, a record for prep-to-pro players. And since he was on the road in front of a sold-out Sacramento crowd, he neither expected nor received much sympathy. The missed shot was an embarrassment. It revealed that the kid still had lessons to learn.

The 18-year-old now understood: sustained greatness at the pro level required more than natural gifts. It demanded obsession.

The early Cleveland years forged James through fire. He averaged 20.9 points, 5.5 rebounds, and 5.9 assists in his first pro season, earning Rookie of the Year honors. But his field-goal shooting (41.7%) and three-point accuracy (29.0%) were both below league averages. Other rookies might have been allowed to be so-so at something. But James was supposed to be great—and the great ones didn't have gaps in their game.

James responded the only way he knew how: by working. If practice started at 10 a.m., he arrived at nine. Donewald watched as the teenager attacked his weaknesses—not during games, but away from the cameras at mundane summer sessions.

By his second season, James shot 35.1% from three-point range and 47.2% from the field. His field-goal accuracy never again dropped below 47% in a season and his ascent accelerated. In 2005, James made his first All-Star team and, at the time, became the youngest player in NBA history to score 50 points in a game—surpassed by Brandon Jennings of the Milwaukee Bucks in 2009. The following season, he captured All-Star Game MVP honors and carried the Cavaliers to their first playoff appearance in eight years.

The 2006–07 season marked James' arrival as a legitimate championship contender. In only his fourth year, he led Cleveland to 50 wins and an upset of the heavily favored Detroit Pistons in the Eastern Conference Finals. The highlight of the series was a Game 5 double-overtime win in which James scored 25 straight points and 29 of his team's last 30.

But in the NBA Finals against the San Antonio Spurs, James was once again taught a harsh lesson about patience. The Spurs swept Cleveland in four games, holding 22-year-old LeBron to 35.6% shooting from the field and forcing 23 turnovers. Bruce Bowen and Tim Duncan smothered James on defense, denying driving lanes. LeBron later admitted he'd been "outplayed" by the veterans.

In his first pro season in 2003–04, James averaged 20.9 points, 5.5 rebounds, and 5.9 assists, earning him Rookie of the Year.

During the 2008 offseason, James helped the U.S. basketball team capture gold at the Beijing Olympics. With that milestone achieved, LeBron returned to Cleveland and pushed the Cavaliers to 66 wins during the 2008–09 campaign, losing just twice at home. He averaged over 35.3 points per game in the playoffs and claimed his first NBA MVP award.

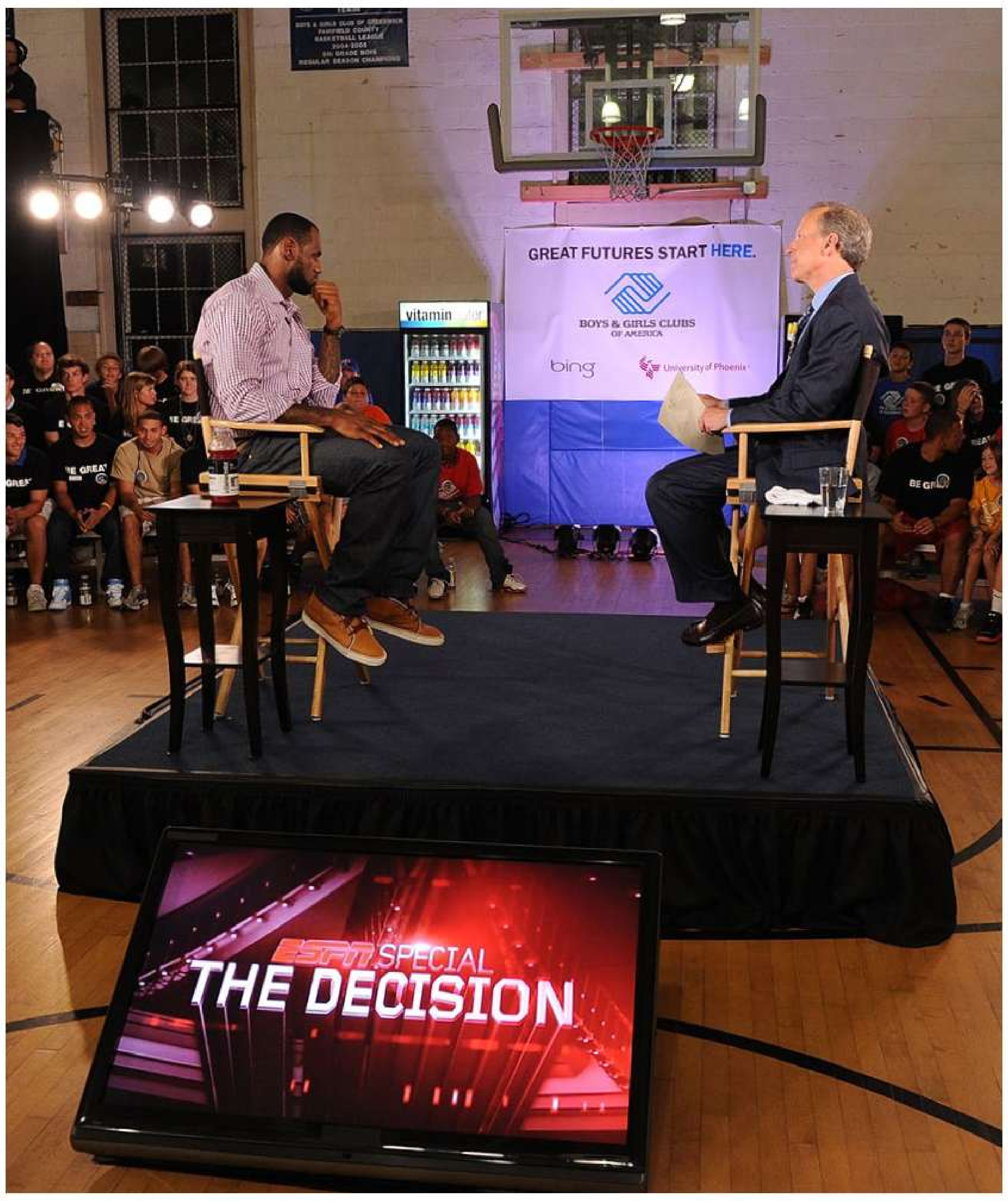
Nike ran advertisements featuring James and Kobe Bryant puppets, anticipating a Finals showdown with the Los Angeles Lakers, even after LeBron was eliminated. Instead, Dwight Howard and the Orlando Magic eliminated Cleveland in the Eastern Conference Finals. Once again, the Chosen One missed out on the NBA's biggest prize.

When the 2009–10 season arrived, pressure was mounting. No longer upstarts, Cleveland's front office knew they risked losing James to free agency unless they delivered a championship. To get over the hump, the Cavs signed four-time NBA champion Shaquille O'Neal to provide veteran leadership. Shaq was no longer in his prime, but maybe he still had enough left to hoist another Larry O'Brien trophy.

The Cavaliers won 61 games. James averaged nearly 29.7 points per game and 8.6 assists, capturing his second consecutive MVP award.

Above, from left: Team USA's Jason Kidd, Kobe Bryant, James, Dwyane Wade, and Carmelo Anthony win Olympic gold in 2008.

James (right) drives to the hoop against the Magic in Game 6 of the Eastern Conference Finals on May 30, 2009, in Orlando.



Yet, once again, Cleveland fell short of the championship title. This time it was the Boston Celtics that ended their season in the Eastern Conference semifinals.

That summer, James became a free agent alongside the Miami Heat's Dwyane Wade and Toronto Raptors' Chris Bosh. On July 8, 2010, ESPN broadcast "The Decision," a televised special many considered unnecessary—and ostentatious. On live TV, James announced his intention to join Miami, forming a superteam with Wade and Bosh.

The backlash was swift and brutal. NBA legends Magic Johnson and Michael Jordan stated they never would have joined forces with rivals at their career peaks. Cavaliers owner Dan Gilbert published a vitriolic open letter about the "betrayal," calling James "cowardly." Some fans burned his jersey on social media.

In hindsight, it's hard to suggest that LeBron James' "Cavaliers Part I" years were a disappointment. He set countless records, established himself as the game's most complete player, and led his team to the Finals for the first time in franchise history. But without a title to top it off, many felt the job unfinished.

The truth is James felt the same way. He understood that he would never optimize his vast potential without a title, and to claim that prize he needed help. If Cleveland wasn't able to give him the support he needed, then he was willing to risk everything for a championship. If that included anger and hate, so be it. James later suggested the negative reaction had racial undertones, with leaders like the late Rev. Jesse Jackson agreeing. Once again, LeBron James was being tested, and the league braced for how he would respond.

Boston's Paul Pierce (left) goes up against Cleveland's Shaquille O'Neal and James in the Eastern Conference semifinals on May 1, 2010.

Above: James (left) was named 2009–10 NBA MVP on May 3, 2010; later in July he spoke about his future NBA plans (right).

CHAPTER 3

THE MIAMI YEARS
2010–2014

WELCOME TO SOUTH BEACH

LeBron James, now with Miami, takes in the pregame festivities against Dallas in Game 2 of the 2011 NBA Finals on June 2, 2011.

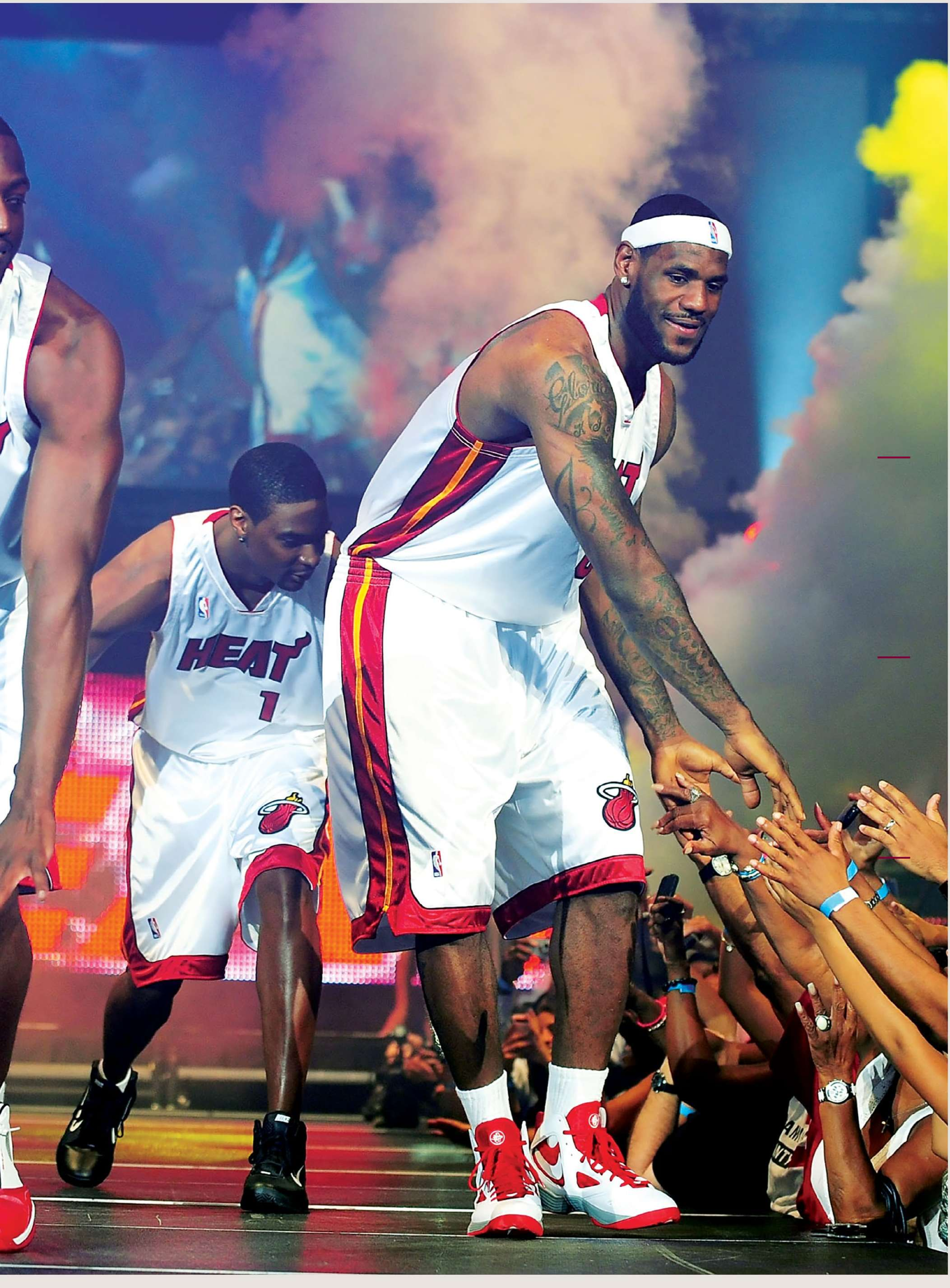
L

LEBRON JAMES STOOD motionless in the right corner of the court, his pose suggesting hesitation. He had just 8 points in the contest and a single fourth-quarter shot attempt. Now James and his Miami Heat teammates swung the ball around the perimeter as if the game was hot potato instead of basketball. Finally, Mike Miller heaved a desperation three as the buzzer sounded. It was an airball.

With that, the underdog Dallas Mavericks evened the series in the 2011 NBA Finals, leaving James to trudge to the locker room while 20,430 Texas voices roared. Five days later, the Mavs clinched the championship.

This wasn't supposed to happen. Not to the Chosen One. Not after joining forces with D-Wade and Chris Bosh to form a "superteam." And certainly not after boldly promising "not one, not two, not three" championships at a raucous Miami welcome party.

From left: Dwyane Wade, Chris Bosh, and James attend the Miami Heat Summer of 2010 Welcome Event on July 9, 2010.


HEAT
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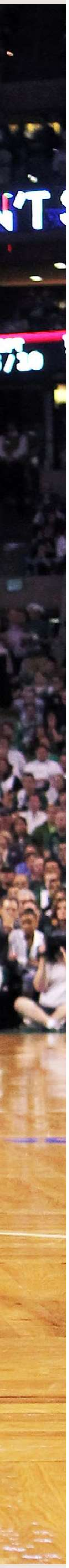


James (left) drives against Boston's Mickaël Piétrus in Game 6 of the Eastern Conference Finals in the 2012 NBA playoffs.

But it did happen, just as there had been a fundamental shift in how LeBron James was perceived. The once-precocious kid you couldn't help but root for was now considered by many to be a villain worth rooting against. After announcing his decision to join the Miami Heat on live television, James was branded "LeFraud." Many fans eagerly jumped on any stumble. And stumble he did. Spectacularly.

James averaged a pedestrian 17.8 points per game in the NBA Finals against Dallas. Game 4 was the low point: the single-digit scoring, the passive body language, and the only magic being the fourth-quarter disappearing act that left teammates bewildered.

But this was not the end of LeBron James's story. It was merely the setup to his greatest chapters. Miami assistant coach David Fizdale watched James transform after the 2011 collapse: "I just saw a different guy come back into the gym. And it was really beautiful to watch his evolution."

The change involved both body and mind. James developed meditation techniques to stay calm in hostile arenas. He learned to block out noise and focus purely on the work. He added new offensive weapons to his attack, worked on his weaknesses, and trained his mind to recognize defensive schemes in real time so he could exploit them mercilessly.

James spent the offseason confronting his demons, retooling his game, and stoking his love for basketball. His redemption campaign began on Christmas Day 2011. Against the same Mavericks, James exploded for 37 points, 10 rebounds, and six assists.

The 2012 playoffs brought the performance that announced James' arrival as a complete player. Facing elimination in Boston during Game 6 of the Eastern Conference Finals—exactly one year after his Dallas nightmare—James delivered one of the most dominant performances in playoff history at the expense of the Celtics. He poured in 45 points and grabbed 15 rebounds, bulldozing through the defense with a fury powered by every criticism, every doubt, and every burned jersey.

Dwyane Wade told him what he needed to hear: "Look, this is your team, your show. We go as far as you will take us."

The Heat came out victorious in Game 7, then dispatched the Oklahoma City Thunder in five games to capture LeBron's first NBA

Miami's 2012 NBA playoff performance against Boston erased any doubt of James' talents as a complete player (above).

championship. James earned his first ring and his first Finals MVP award. And it wouldn't be the last.

The following season, James reached a new peak. He shot 56.5% from the field and 40.6% from three-point range in 2012–13—both career highs. The Heat won a second consecutive championship, defeating the San Antonio Spurs in seven games, with James scoring 37 points in Game 7. He claimed his second straight Finals MVP award to pair with his fourth regular-season MVP honor.

On March 3, 2014, wearing a protective mask after suffering a broken nose, James scorched the Charlotte Bobcats for a career-high 61 points. He was 29 years old, at the absolute zenith of his powers, the full realization of his teenage promise. He averaged over 27.1 points per game, 6.9 rebounds per game, and 6.3 assists per game in his second consecutive season shooting over 56% from the field. It seemed as if nothing could slow him down... until the 2014 Finals. A rematch with the Spurs ended in defeat after five games. San Antonio dismantled Miami on the court, and, ultimately off the court as well. A new era loomed.

On July 11, 2014, James announced his return to Cleveland in a carefully crafted *Sports Illustrated* essay titled "I'm Coming Home." Unlike "The Decision," this reveal showed a mature understanding of his roots and finishing what he started.

LeBron's growth during his four seasons in Miami ran deeper than basketball. He learned that failure, properly metabolized, becomes fuel. The Miami years remain essential to understanding James' career. The villain became the hero. The prodigy became the champion. And the player who stood frozen in the corner became the one who never hesitated again.

With King James, Miami won a second consecutive championship, defeating San Antonio in seven games on June 20, 2013.

CHAPTER 4

THE CLEVELAND YEARS PART II

2014–2018

HOMETOWN HERO

In 2014, LeBron James returned home to Cleveland and the Cavaliers—a franchise that had arguably crumbled without him—carrying the weight of the whole team and the town.

NBA
CAVS

W

WITH 1:51 LEFT IN GAME 7 at Oracle Arena and the scoreboard stuck at 89–89, the noise level dropped to a nervous hum. LeBron James was already moving, sprinting from near midcourt as the Golden State Warriors pushed a 2-on-1 break the other way. Andre Iguodala gathered the ball, a clean look at the rim opening in front of him.

That's when James closed 60 feet of hardwood in under three seconds, rose with a defender's instinct rather than a scorer's ambition, and smothered the layup against the backboard.

It wasn't a celebration play. It was a survival play. At that moment, James wasn't just protecting a tie game. He was defending a city and the promise that he made to it with almost impossible expectations.

That chase-down block became the signature image of LeBron James' second act in Cleveland, but the story began two years earlier with a quieter decisive act. In the summer of 2014, James chose to return to the Cavaliers, a franchise that had cratered in his absence.

Cleveland wasn't Miami. There was no superteam for support and no margin for error. What James walked into was a rebuilding roster, a restless fan base, and the implicit understanding that he had to carry the weight of the team and the town. All of it.

This wasn't just about coming home. It was taking responsibility.

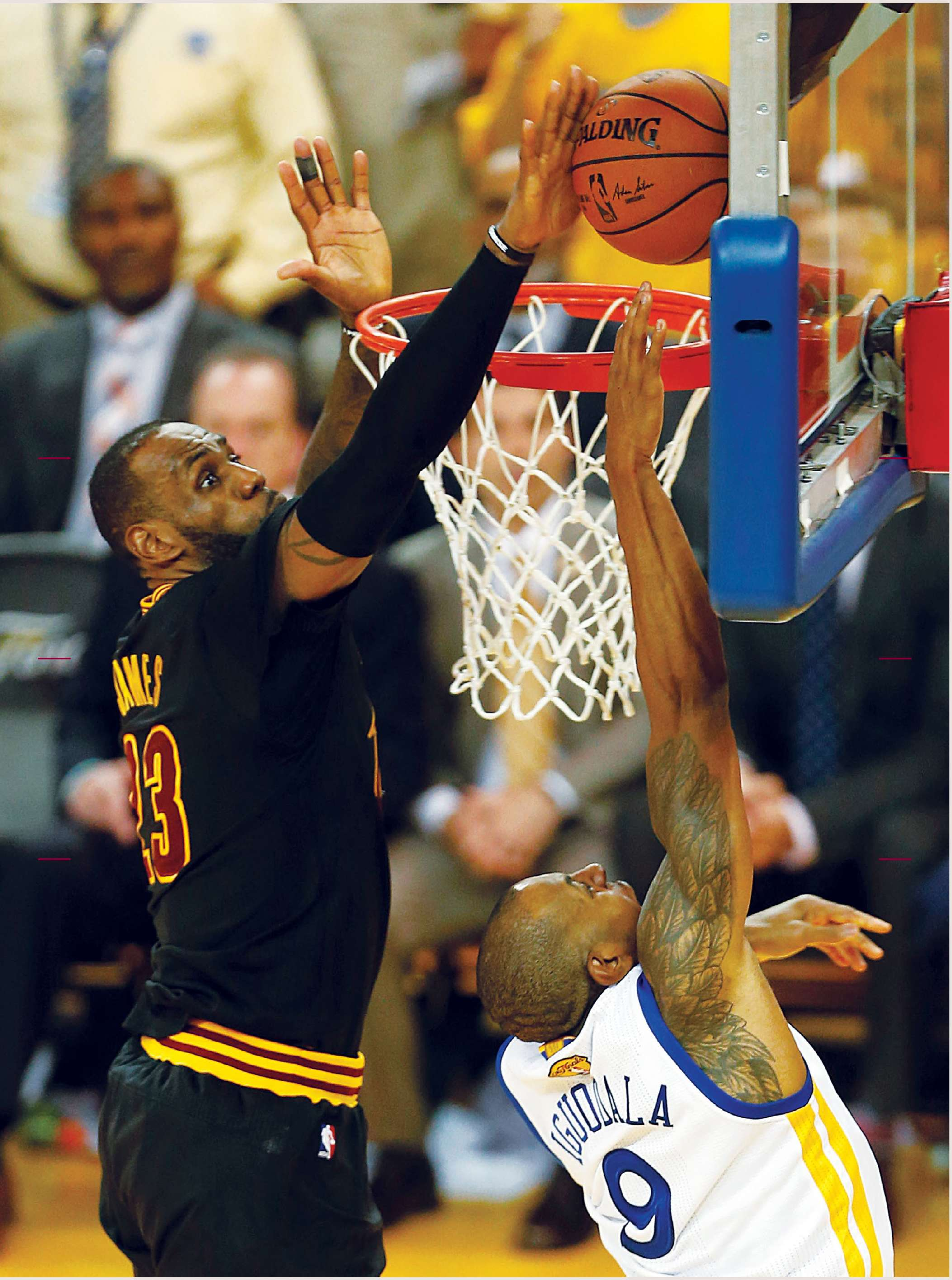
The early months of the 2014–15 season were uneven, but by spring the Cavaliers found their footing. With Kyrie Irving emerging as a dynamic scorer and Kevin Love added to the mix, Cleveland surged through the Eastern Conference. But by the time they fought their way to the NBA Finals, injuries had stripped away much of LeBron's support. Irving and Love were sidelined, leaving James to shoulder an unprecedented load against the rising Golden State Warriors.

James responded with a Finals performance that bordered on defiant, averaging 35.8 points, 13.3 rebounds, and 8.8 assists per game. Cleveland lost the series in six games, but James walked off the floor having reasserted something essential: He could still bend the league to his will.

The following season, Cleveland finished atop the East and James entered the playoffs with a singular focus. When the Cavaliers met Golden State again in the Finals, the Warriors looked untouchable, fresh off a 73-win, record-setting regular season. When the Cavs fell behind 3–1, another Warriors title felt inevitable. No team had ever come back from that deficit so late in an NBA championship series.

When James delivered back-to-back 41-point performances in Games 5 and 6 to

James blocks a shot by the Warriors' Andre Iguodala in Game 7 of the 2016 NBA Finals on June 19, 2016, preserving an 89–89 tie.


JAMES
23
SPALDING
IGUODALA
9

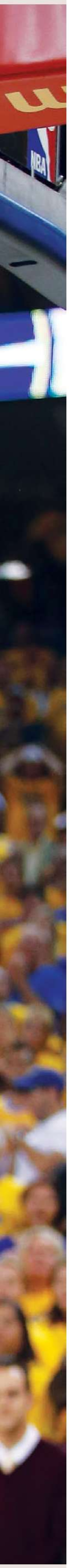
THE CLOROX COMPANY
CITY NATIONAL BANK
2016 PLAYOF
GOLDEN STATE
11
WARRIORS

even the series, it seemed valiant, but likely nothing more. Then came Game 7. James recorded 27 points, 11 rebounds, and 11 assists, and authored the defining defensive play of his career. The Cavs won 93–89, and James collapsed on the court. Cleveland finally had its championship. James led all players in points, rebounds, assists, steals, and blocks during the 2016 NBA Finals—a statistical feat without precedent.

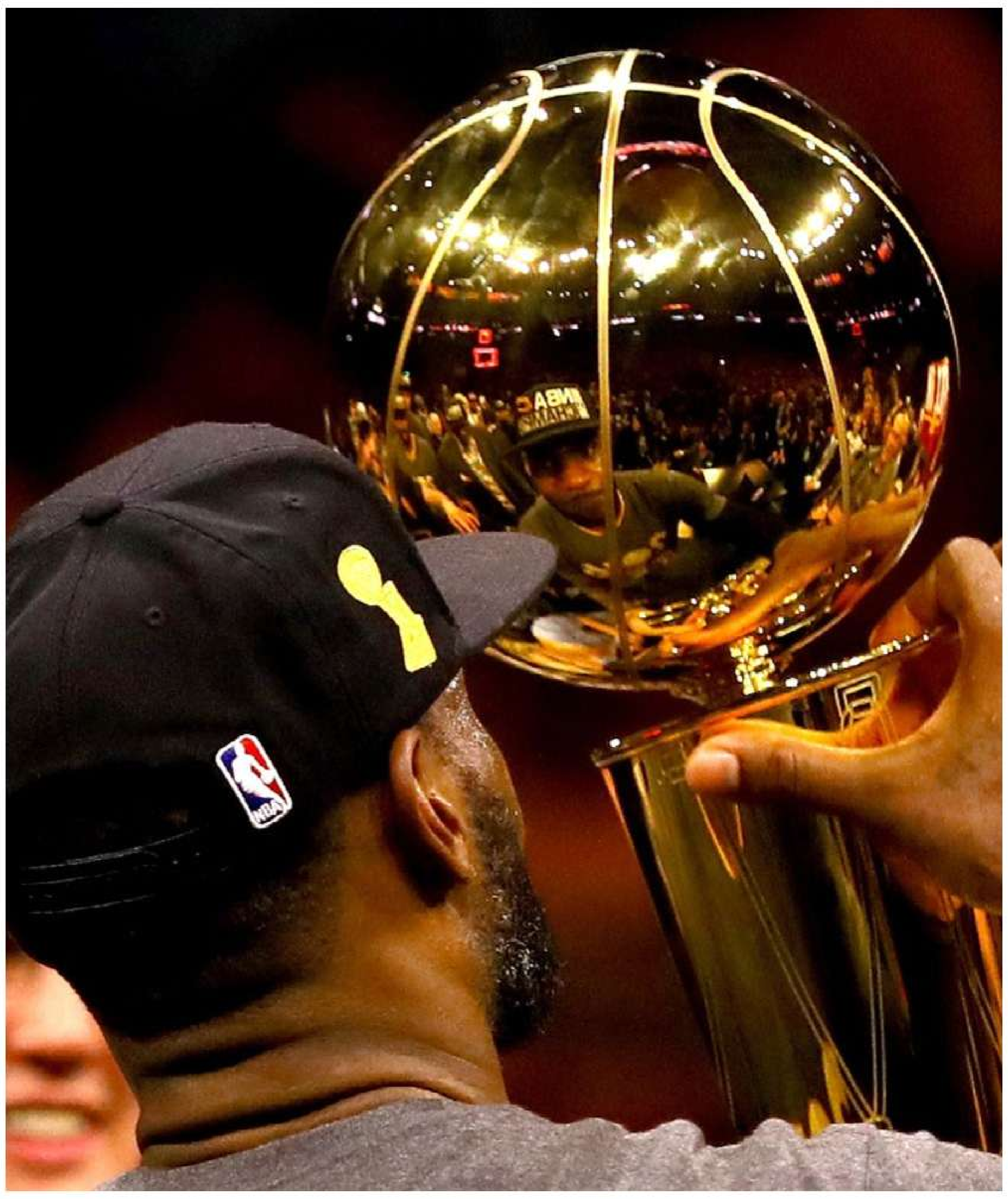
The title was redemption. The seasons that followed were reality. The Warriors grew stronger, adding Kevin Durant and transforming their dominance into a dynasty. Meanwhile, Cleveland remained the East's standard-bearer, reaching the Finals again in 2017 after a near-perfect conference run, but the gap was clear.

James was still brilliant—still first-team All-NBA, still the axis of Cleveland's power—but his greatness alone could no longer tilt the balance. Losing to Golden State in the Finals felt less like failure and more like confirmation of a shifting league.

By 2017–18, the Cavaliers were unstable. Cleveland tried reshaping the roster midseason, but once again everything came down to James doing his part—which was everything. At age 33, he played all 82 regular-season games for the first time in his career. He averaged 27.5 points per game, 8.6 rebounds per game, and 9.1 assists per game, then elevated again in the playoffs. James accounted for roughly a quarter of the team's rebounds, half of the team's assists, a third of the team's steals, and just over 42% of the team's blocks—a level of responsibility unmatched in decades. In May 2017, he'd also surpassed Michael Jordan as the NBA's all-time playoff scoring leader and became just the seventh player to reach 30,000 career points.



Slam dunk! James (left) gets one over the Warriors' Klay Thompson in Game 7 of the NBA Finals in Oakland, Calif., on June 19, 2016.



Top: Golden State's Stephen Curry defends James during the first half in Game 7 of the 2016 NBA Finals in Oakland on June 19, 2016.

Above: James holds up the Larry O'Brien trophy after the Cavs beat the Warriors in a historic comeback to win the 2016 NBA Finals.

LeBron led the Cavs back to the Finals for the fourth straight year. This time, there was no miracle left. Golden State swept Cleveland.

The history books will show that LeBron James lost three Finals in four seasons during his second run in Cleveland. But that's just a statistic. LeBron's teammates know the truth behind the numbers. They spoke about his daily discipline, his attention to preparation, and the way he found another level when the calendar turned to April. Along the way, he faced criticism, fatigue, and the relentless expectation that he could manufacture solutions where none existed.

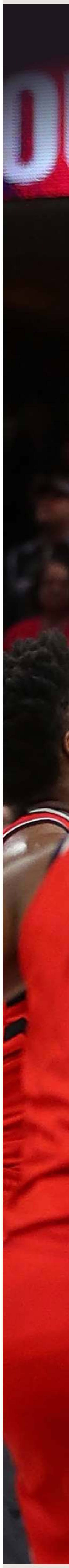
When LeBron left Cleveland for Los Angeles in the summer of 2018, he departed with no regrets. Between 2014 and 2018, he took the Cavs to four straight Finals, delivered the franchise's only championship, and redefined what responsibility at the highest level looks like.

This also might go down as the stretch that punctuated his once-in-a-lifetime career—not because it was flawless, but because it demanded grit and endurance. Long after the numbers blur together, the chase-down block that helped make Cleveland a champion defines the type of player LeBron James grew to become when everything was on the line.

CAVS
23
BRADLEY
0
12

In 2016–17, James (above) led Cleveland back to the Eastern Conference Finals, beating Boston in five games to return to the NBA Finals.

In Game 3 of the Eastern Conference semifinals on May 5, 2018, James (right) hits a shot against the Toronto Raptors.



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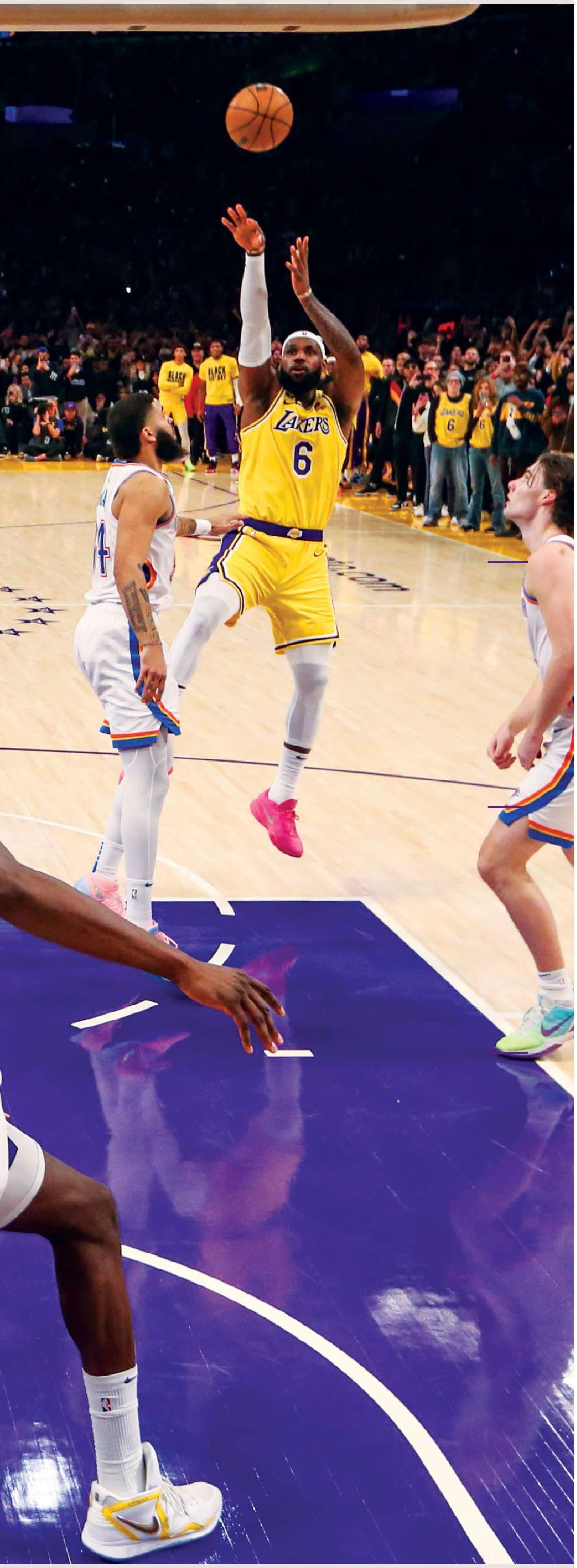
SPALDING
23
LOWRY
7
RAPTORS
9
LICANS

CHAPTER 5

THE LOS ANGELES YEARS
2018–PRESENT

SUPER-STAR

By the time LeBron James (here in 2023) arrived in Los Angeles in 2018, he was already a legend. At 33, he joined a Lakers franchise rich with history but looking for greater relevance.



ON FEB. 7, 2023, AN ARENA full of fans seemed to exhale all at once. With 10.9 seconds left in the third quarter at Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles, LeBron James drifted toward the right wing, measured the moment, and rose into a familiar fadeaway over Kenrich Williams. The ball fell cleanly through the net, and a 39-year-old NBA record finally gave way.

James had passed Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as the league's all-time leading scorer. The game stopped. The crowd stood. Abdul-Jabbar emerged and handed James the ball, the exchange a confirmation that LeBron was an all-time legend, albeit one still in uniform.

By the time James arrived in Los Angeles in 2018, his mythology was well defined. At 33, he joined a Lakers franchise rich with history but starved for recent relevance, one that had not had a winning record since the 2012–13 season.

On Feb. 7, 2023, James scored his 38,388th career point to attain the NBA scoring title during a game against Oklahoma City.

The move was quieter than his previous departures, but the stakes were just as high. Returning the Lakers to the top would require patience, reinvention, and a willingness to let time—not expectations—do the heavy lifting. What followed was a masterclass in endurance.

The early days were uneven. A groin injury on Christmas Day of the 2018–19 season limited James to 55 games, the fewest of his career until he tied that low in 2022–23. The Lakers finished 37–45. For the first time since 2005, James watched the playoffs from home.

But those close to LeBron saw no panic. His habits remained fixed: early mornings, relentless conditioning, and a focus on putting himself—and everyone around him—in position to win.

The turning point came the following season with the arrival of Anthony Davis. With an elite two-way player beside him, James shifted his game. He became the Lakers' primary facilitator, often operating from deep in the backcourt, initiating the offense, bending defenses, and delivering surgical passes—a quiet acknowledgment that game intelligence could be as devastating as force.

But as the 2019–20 season unfolded, the challenges became unprecedented for every player in the league—not to mention every fan in the world. This was the season of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which eventually pushed the NBA into a sealed-off bubble in Orlando. Yes, there would be basketball—but there

Above: The Lakers and the Clippers wear BLM shirts and kneel during the national anthem, prior to their game on July 30, 2020.

James (right) drives to the basket during the first quarter against the Heat in Game 6 of the 2020 NBA Finals on Oct. 11, 2020.

VOTE
LAKERS
23
SPALDING

would be no playoff crowds, no rhythm, and no familiarity.

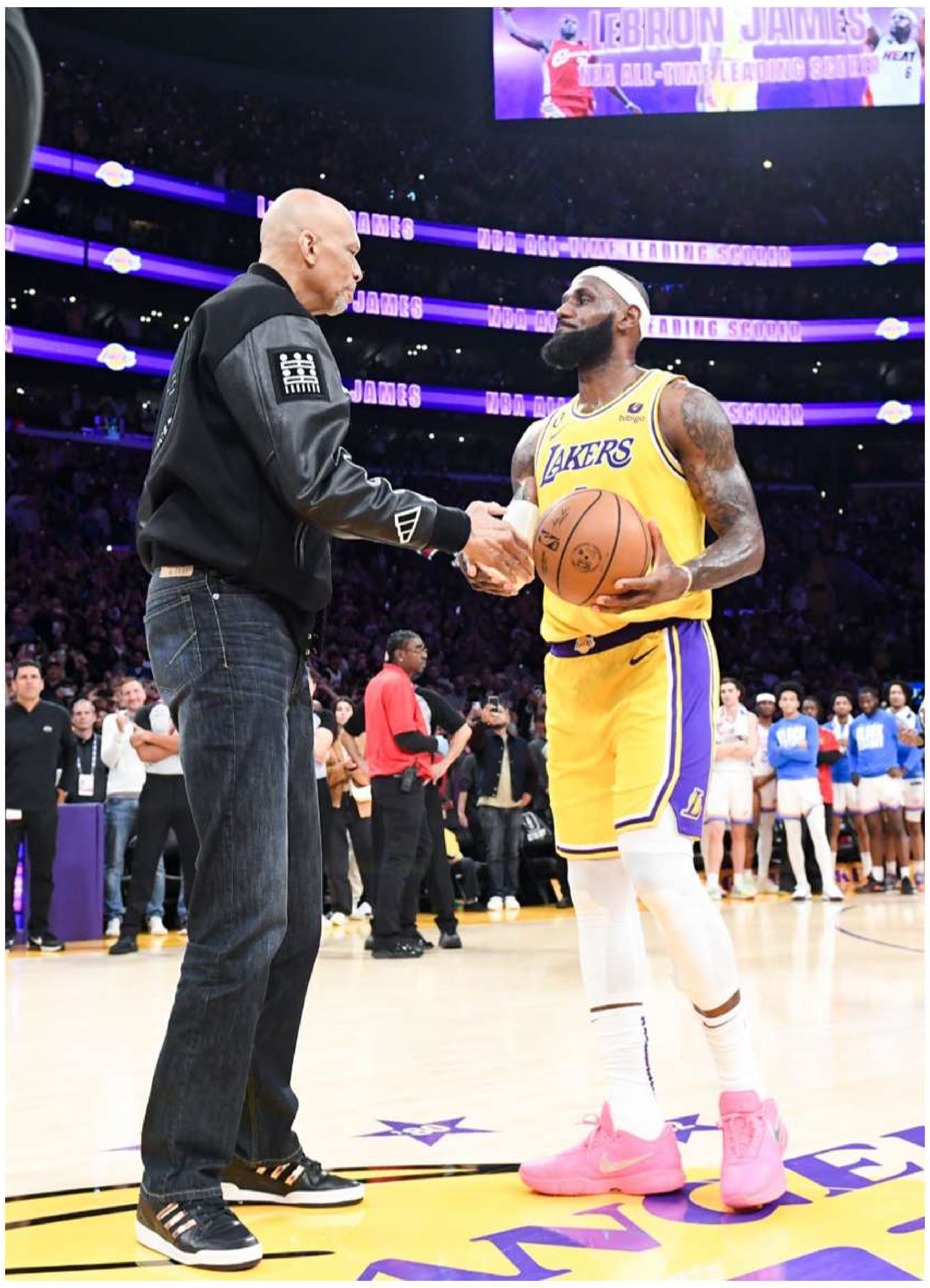
Behind James and Davis, the Lakers ignored the uncertainty to claim their franchise's 17th championship. James averaged 29.8 points per game in the Finals, along with 11.8 rebounds and 8.5 assists, earning his fourth Finals MVP award. That could've been the end. But it wasn't.

LeBron kept going—reaching new milestones, redefining greatness. In 2023, he became the NBA's career scoring leader. In 2024, the first player in league history to reach 40,000 regular-season points. In 2025, his combined playoff and regular-season total climbed past 50,000. By late January 2026, he had logged more than 60,000 regular-season minutes—another threshold no one else had ever crossed.

Even as his age climbs, James continues to redefine the boundaries of what is possible. On Feb. 20, 2025, at 40 years old, he scored 42 points in a game, becoming the oldest player to do so—a distinction that mirrored one he once held as the league's youngest to reach the same point total.

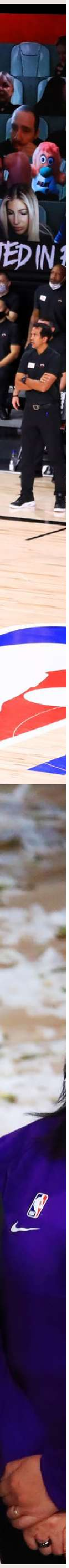
He has moved steadily up the all-time leaders list for steals and three-point field goals. His highlights—and there are still highlights—define what sustained excellence looks like over more than two decades. There have been frustrations along the way. Playoff exits. Nights when the body lags behind the mind. Losses that seem heavier because LeBron James is expected to win, always.

But if there are basketball fans who chose to hold the final act of LeBron James' career against him, it's an error of perception rather than a reflection of reality. His decision-making remains sharp. His athletic ability is still high. And his accomplishments speak for themselves.



Whenever LeBron steps onto a basketball court, he remains the player who must be accounted for—the one who demands attention. How many other players have been able to back up their reputation past the age of 40?

As for the naysayers, James has defied their noise for so long he doesn't even hear it. "All your life you are told the things you cannot do," he once said. "All your life they will say you're not good enough or strong enough or talented enough. They will say you're the wrong height or the wrong weight or the wrong type to play this or be this or achieve this. They will tell you no. A thousand times no. Until all the no's become meaningless."



Right: James (top) shoots the ball during Game 6 of the 2020 NBA Finals against Miami—a game L.A. won to take the trophy (bottom).

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (above) congratulates James after he became the all-time NBA scoring leader on Feb. 7, 2023.

CHAPTER 6

A THREE-TIME OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST, LEBRON JAMES SET A NEW STANDARD FOR INTERNATIONAL PLAY

TEAM USA

Playing with Team USA, LeBron James (here in August 2012) has earned three Olympic gold medals in Beijing (2008), London (2012), and Paris (2024), plus a bronze medal in Athens in 2004.

THE BASKETBALL WORLD expected a coronation at the 2004 Summer Games in Athens, Greece. LeBron James was 19 years old—and the stage was set for something special. But instead of winning his first Olympic gold medal, James came home with the bronze.

The historically invincible Americans had been exposed. And James—already anointed as basketball's next king barely a year into his career—was the face of the disappointment. To blame LeBron was, of course, unfair. Team USA fielded a roster of NBA All-Stars, a trend that started in 1996. But this group was no Dream Team. The U.S. stumbled to a 5–3 record.

Keep in mind, this was not LeBron's squad to carry. He was the youngest American to make the men's Olympic basketball team since Spencer Haywood in 1968. James averaged a modest 5.4 points per game, yet even if the U.S. had gone back to a roster of all college athletes he still would have been a baby.

Once again, the best was yet to come. From that bronze medal disappointment in Athens to his 2024 tournament MVP performance in Paris, James is the only player in U.S. basketball history to win three Olympic gold medals with three MVP titles to match.

James matured in parallel with Team USA's resurgence, evolving from a role player on a humbled squad into the veteran statesman who helped redefine American excellence in international play.

The redemption tour began at the 2008 Games in Beijing, China. James led the "Redeem Team," a collection of NBA superstars determined to restore American supremacy after the Athens debacle. No longer the tentative teenager, James averaged 15.5 points,

In his first Olympics in Athens in 2004, James (above) and Team USA took home the bronze, falling short of expectations.

Opposite: James (#6) shoots one over China's Yao Ming (#13) during the 2008 Beijing Games. Team USA went on to win the gold.

Yao Ming
13
USA
6
CHINA
11
USA
15
Beijing 2008

CHANDLER
4
USA
6

5.2 rebounds, and 3.8 assists across eight unblemished games.

Four years later in London, James arrived as an established champion, fresh off his first NBA title. He delivered the performance that would define his Olympic brilliance—not just dominance, but versatility and leadership. During preliminary play, he stopped an upset. Lithuania led the Americans 82–80 in the fourth quarter before James scored nine of his 20 points in the final four minutes to secure a 99–94 victory. Against Australia in the quarterfinals, he recorded the first triple-double in United States Olympic history: 11 points, 14 rebounds, and 12 assists (which also tied the American single-game record in Olympic play).

In the gold medal clash against Spain, James contributed 19 points, 7 rebounds, and a team-high four assists. Across the tournament, he averaged 13.3 points, 5.6 rebounds, and a team-high 5.6 assists while shooting a blistering 60.3% from the field.

Then came Paris 2024. At 39, an age when most legends have retired from international competition, James engineered perhaps his most improbable Olympic masterpiece. He averaged 14.2 points, a team-high 8.2 rebounds, and a team-best 10.2 assists per game. His assists average was the highest by any American in Olympic history. As tournament MVP, he proved indispensable in pressure moments against Serbia and France, his court vision and veteran savvy carrying the team.

James' career totals as an Olympian: America's all-time leader in assists (139), and ranked second in points (358), rebounds (136), games played (29), and steals (42). He might well have become the leader in almost every category had he also played in Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020. But LeBron sat out those Olympics due to

After the U.S. won the gold medal game against Spain at the 2012 London Olympics, James waved the American flag in celebration.

PARIS 2024
PARIS 2024

self-awareness. In both cases, he knew Team USA could win without him.

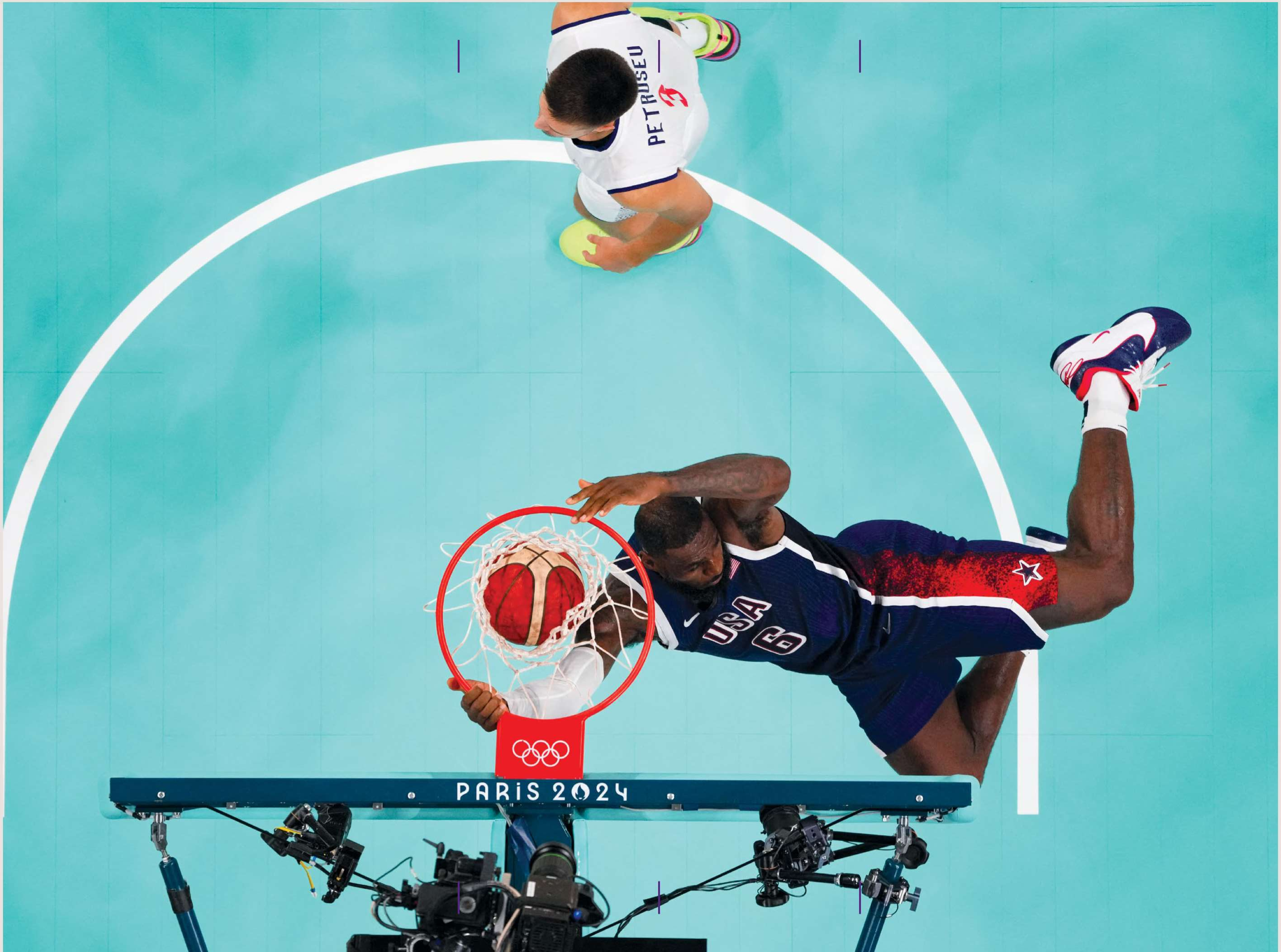
After six consecutive NBA Finals appearances heading into 2016, and having logged more minutes than any player across those punishing seasons, James chose recovery over glory. His body needed rest more than his ego demanded validation. Then, following a severe ankle injury that devastated his 2020–21 season, James again prioritized long-term health over short-term achievement. He skipped the Tokyo Games—which were held in 2021 due to the pandemic.

These weren't surrenders. They were strategic calculations from someone who understood that greatness doesn't happen just by showing up. James returned when it mattered, not out of obligation but because he still had something to prove—to himself, if no one else. During the Paris Opening Ceremony, he became the first men's basketball player to serve as flag bearer for Team USA, an honor that recognized not just his accomplishments but his endurance.

LeBron closed his Olympic career the way champions dream: golden, dominant, and on his own terms. He told podcasters afterward that Paris was the final chapter. He'll watch the 2028 Los Angeles Games from the stands—he'll be 43, after all—uninterested in chasing any more glory. "We can't top what we just did," he said simply.

Above: The USA men's basketball team pose with their gold medals during the medal ceremony at the 2024 Paris Games.

James (right) gets in an early dunk against Serbia in the men's preliminary round Group C match at the 2024 Paris Games.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3
USA
6
PARIS 2024

CHAPTER 7

COUNTING LEBRON'S GREATNESS BY THE NUMBERS

TOP 23

LeBron James (here in 2018) came blazing into the NBA as a prodigy in 2003, and continues to put up the numbers more than 20 years into his legendary career.

I PROMISE
23

JAMES

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L

LEBRON JAMES' CAREER stretches across different eras and reflects his ever-evolving style of play. He arrived as a prodigy and matured into a strategist, never surrendering relevance along the way. His career numbers aren't just dusty stats for the record books. Look more closely and you can trace LeBron's endurance, game intelligence, his gift for adaptation, and the sheer force of his will.

1,562

FINALS POINTS

Second most all-time, trailing only the great Jerry West (yet James has a superior 4–6 Finals record to West's 1–8).

1

SCORING TITLE AND ASSIST TITLE

James only led the league in points per game once (30.0 ppg in 2007–08). The same is true for assists per game (10.2 apg in 2019–20).

LeBron reacts during the fourth quarter against the Miami Heat in Game 4 of the 2020 NBA Finals in Lake Buena Vista, Florida.

13

FIRST TEAM ALL-NBA SELECTIONS

No player in NBA history has more. The closest are Kobe Bryant, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and Karl Malone, each with 11.

55

NBA FINALS GAMES PLAYED

This ranks fourth in league history.

5

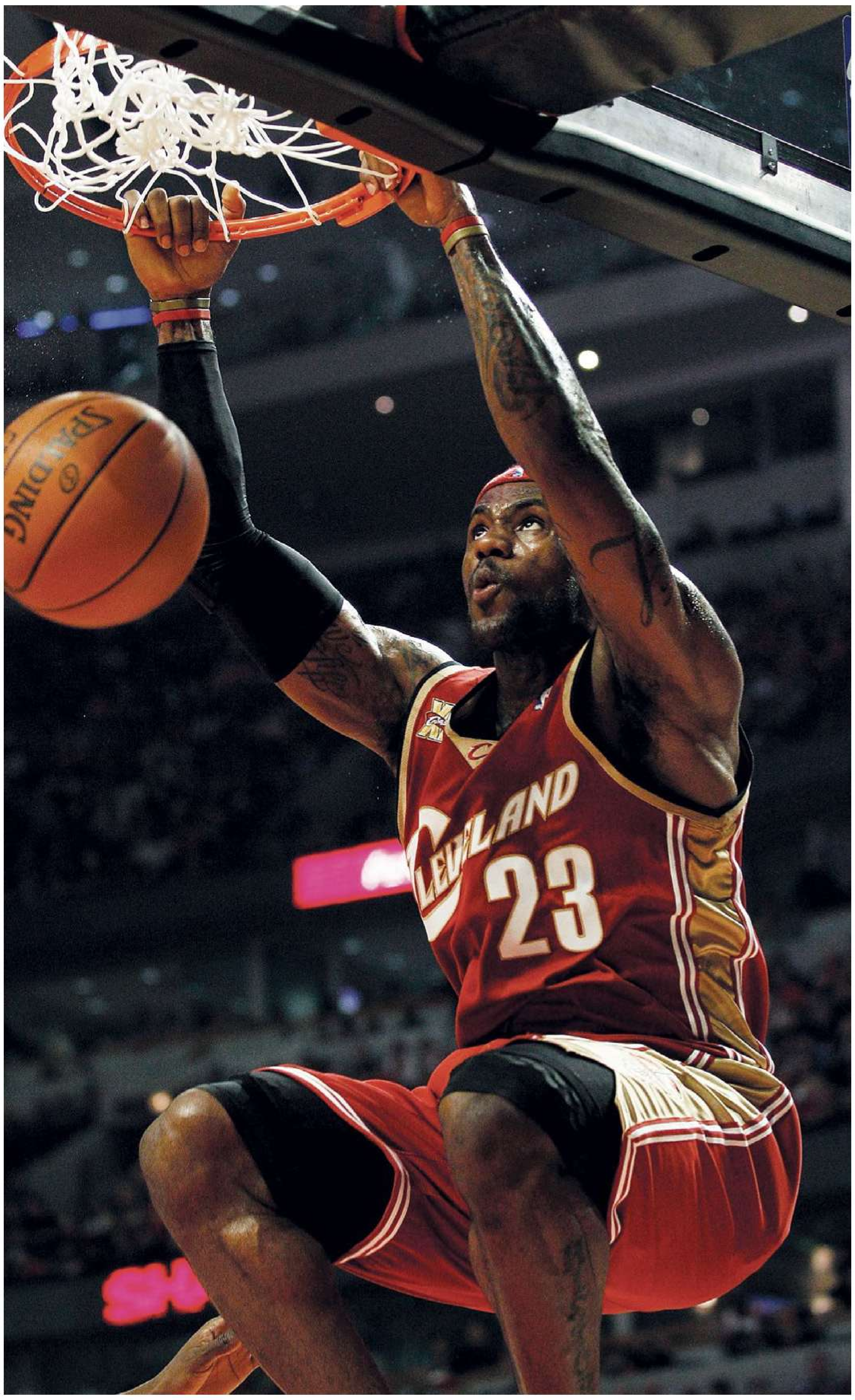
PLAYOFF BUZZER BEATERS

The player sometimes criticized for not coming up clutch has more post-season game winners than anyone else in league history.

493

PLAYOFF STEALS

The most all-time, and a tribute to James' impact defensively.



8,289

PLAYOFF POINTS

The most all-time. The closest competitor is Michael Jordan (5,987).

James (above, left) basks in the glory after defeating Golden State 93–89 in Game 7 of the NBA Finals on June 19, 2016.

Contributing to his 8,289 playoff points—so far—James (above) dunks against Chicago in the NBA Playoffs on April 25, 2010.

2,095

PLAYOFF ASSISTS

Second only to Hall of Famer Magic Johnson.

22

ALL-STAR APPEARANCES

As of his 23rd season,
he missed only once—as a rookie.

2

LEBRONS IN THE SAME GAME

LeBron and his son, LeBron Raymone James Jr. (better known as Bronny), suited up and played together for the Lakers during the 2024 season opener. It's the only time a father and son duo have been on the same team, or on the same court, in an NBA game.

4

NBA CHAMPIONSHIPS, FINALS MVP AWARDS AND REGULAR-SEASON MVPS

LeBron won regular season MVPs with Cleveland and Miami and Finals MVPs with all three teams he has played for (Cleveland, Miami, and Los Angeles).

30 FOR 40

LeBron is the only player in NBA history to score 40 or more points against all 30 teams.

In terms of NBA All-Star appearances, James (above, in February 2010) has only missed one—as a rookie—in 23 seasons thus far.

Opposite: James scores two of his 28 points in a game against Dallas at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles on Feb. 12, 2026.

20

A TRIPLE-DOUBLE IN HIS 20TH SEASON

LeBron was the first player in NBA history to have a triple-double in his 20th season or later (28 points, 10 rebounds, and 11 assists on Jan. 31, 2023, against the Knicks). He went on to become the oldest player in league history to have a triple-double (41 years old with 28 points, 12 assists, and 10 rebounds on Feb. 12, 2026, against the Mavericks).

+43,000

REGULAR-SEASON POINTS

And counting, for as long as LeBron wants to keep playing…

184

PLAYOFF WINS

James has the most playoff wins of any player in league history. He'd rank 10th all-time.

284

PLAYOFF BLOCKED SHOTS

He's the only small forward in the league's top 10.

56

POINTS AT THE AGE OF 20

LeBron became the youngest player ever to score 56 points in the NBA, doing so against the Raptors in March 2005.

449

ALL-STAR GAME POINTS

The most in league history. The next closest is Kobe Bryant with 290.

With 43,000-plus regular-season points, James (above) keeps the tally going during a game against Memphis on Jan. 4, 2026.

69

PLAYER OF THE WEEK AWARDS

The next closest competitors—Kobe Bryant and Kevin Garnett—aren't even close. They won the honor 33 times.

41

PLAYER OF THE MONTH AWARDS

Over the span of his career, he is both the youngest and oldest winner.

10,000

POINTS-REBOUNDS-ASSISTS

LeBron is the only NBA player with 10,000+ points, 10,000+ rebounds, and 10,000+ assists. His totals across the game's three main statistical categories speak to his versatility.

23

NBA SEASONS

No other player in league history had such longevity. The next closest is Vince Carter with 22 seasons.

33

POINTS PER GAME

LeBron has the highest career scoring average (33.1 to be exact) in five-game minimum playoff elimination games.

James (top, in September 2017) has won the Player of the Week award 69 times, and the Player of the Month award 41 times.

With 23 NBA seasons under his belt, James (above, in his Miami era) has experienced longevity like no other player in the league.

CHAPTER 8

THE DEBATE

WHO IS THE GOAT?
THE ARGUMENT FOR LEBRON
IS CLEAR

For those who grew up watching Michael Jordan's gravity-defying dunks, MJ will always be the gold standard. But a case can be made for LeBron James (here in October 2023).

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FOR FANS OLD ENOUGH TO be raised on *SportsCenter* highlights, Michael Jordan remains basketball's gold standard. But for everyone else, there's LeBron James. And, as the years pass and the historic achievements continue to swing in his favor, it's time for hoopheads of all ages to finally admit that the game has never had another player who matches King James in dominance, endurance, reinvention, and drama.

Modern basketball fans don't merely watch James play basketball; they track his every movement, measure him, debate him, and, ultimately, compare him. Not to his peers, but to the game's legends. The case that LeBron is the greatest player ever to play the game evolves with every season, every playoff run, and every statistical milestone.

Jordan's résumé is sealed in archival glass. And even the most passionate MJ fans—of

Two of the greatest NBA players of all time—James and Michael Jordan—shake hands at the 2022 NBA All-Star Game on Feb. 20, 2022.

9:04
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cingular
The Washington Post
www.washingtonpost.com
DAVIS
31
23
32

NBA ALL-TIME LEADING SCORE
LAKERS
6
CAPTAIN
33
Wilson

which there are many—don't talk about the final two seasons of his career when he unretired (again) and suited up as a Washington Wizard. The same is not true of LeBron. He can still take over a game. He still demands attention on the floor. And he might even help a team win another championship.

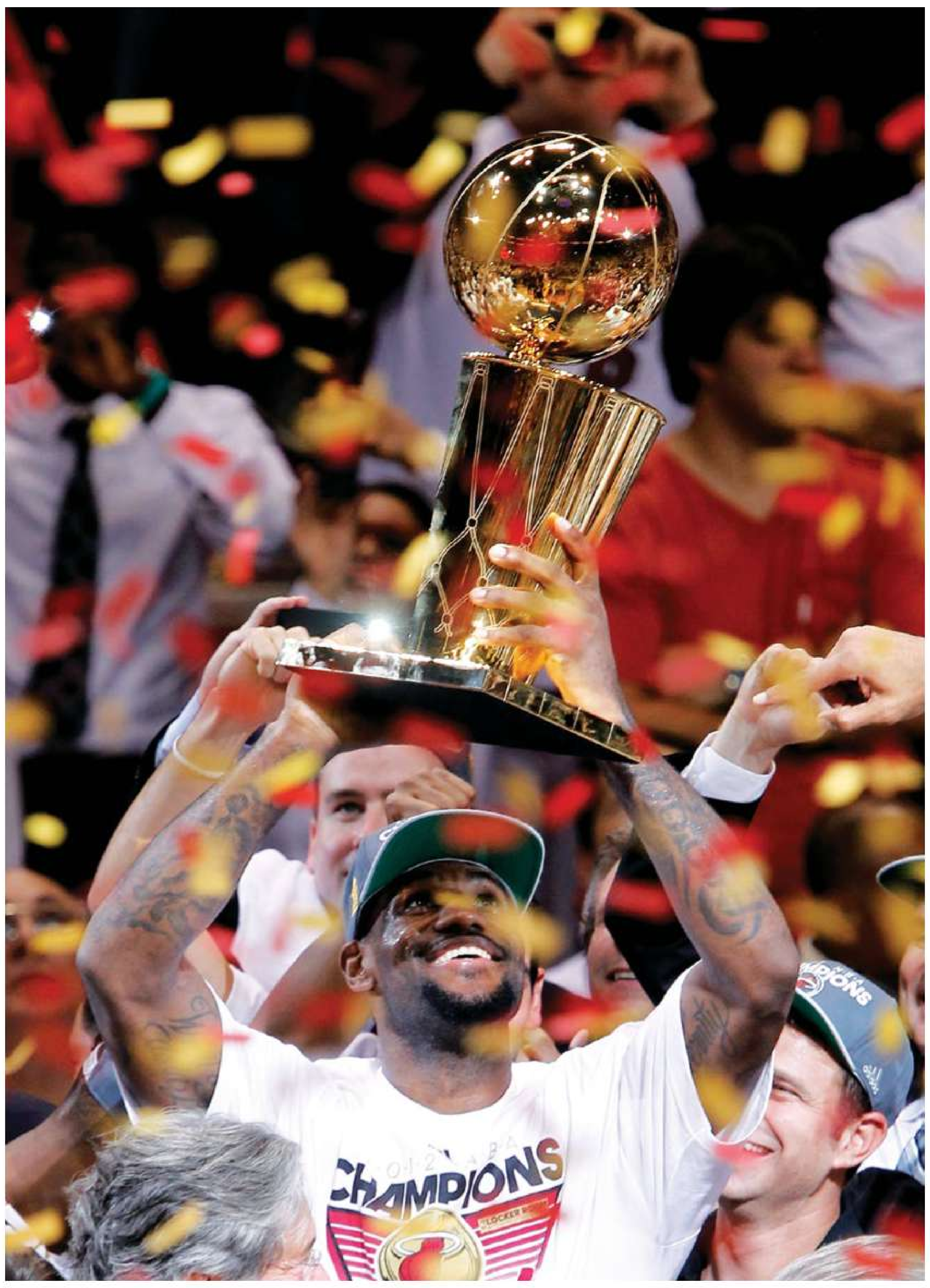
To embrace LeBron is to accept that he is both the heir to basketball's past and the author of its future. He must be analyzed in real time because there's never been another player quite like him. His career arc stretches so long that it has outlasted every rival.

That elasticity—of style, of role, of expectation—is precisely why the argument persists. When defining "greatest," one must first define the criteria. So set sentimentality aside and look at the numbers. In that unbiased light, certain truths come into focus. Jordan may remain the more explosive scorer on a per-game basis, averaging 30.1 points to James' 26.9, but James surpasses him in rebounds and assists, with averages of 7.5 rebounds and 7.4 assists per game to Jordan's 6.2 and 5.3. Those numbers reveal a philosophical divide: Jordan as virtuoso soloist, James as orchestral conductor.

Longevity is the first category where James doesn't merely edge out Jordan—he overwhelms him. James has appeared in over 1,600 regular-season games compared with Jordan's 1,072, logging more than 60,000 minutes to Jordan's 41,011. Over that extended span of time, James has produced more than 43,100 points (the all-time record, and counting), 11,967 rebounds, and 11,877 assists—totals that dwarf Jordan's 32,292 points, 6,672 rebounds, and 5,633 assists.

LeBron's durability alone makes him unique. That he has played so long at such a high level elevates him to the kind of player who's singularity won't fully be appreciated until he's gone. Once LeBron retires, decades will pass before anyone else even comes close to what he has accomplished. It's also entirely possible that it may never happen.

But didn't Jordan mean more to the Chicago Bulls than James has meant to the teams he's played for? That's a common misperception. Once again, the numbers tell a different story. As measured by efficiency—a category often presumed to belong to Jordan—LeBron has a higher true shooting percentage (59.0 to 56.9)



Left: Months before James (bottom, with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar) was drafted, Jordan (top) went up against the Cavs on Nov. 6, 2002.

James (above) holds up his first championship trophy, won with the Miami Heat against the Oklahoma City Thunder, on June 21, 2012.

and better three-point accuracy (34.9% to 32.7%). The playoffs, basketball's ultimate test, tell a similar story. Jordan's scoring average rises to a gaudy 33.4 points, but James counters with broader dominance: 9.0 rebounds and 7.2 assists per game, compared with Jordan's 6.4 and 5.7. And the totals again favor James decisively—over 8,200 postseason points, 2,600 rebounds, and 2,000 assists to Jordan's 5,987, 1,152, and 1,022.

Critics cling to rings, and Jordan's 6–0 Finals record remains the cleanest argument in his favor. Yet context complicates that overly simplified perception. James has reached the Finals more often—10 times to Jordan's six—and controlled the Eastern Conference for nearly a decade with two separate franchises, Cleveland and Miami. When he left those teams, both slipped into losing seasons, a testament to his impact. Said more simply: Championships measure peaks; influence measures impact.

Jordan may embody nostalgically perfect moments. But James embodies the perfect career. And that career keeps moving. Each season, LeBron adds another record, another run, another wrinkle in the story of basketball greatness. He continues to cross thresholds once thought unreachable. The first player ever to surpass 50,000 combined regular-season and playoff points? Come on.

Of course, the debate will go on, as such debates should. It lives in barbershops and comment threads, in analytics spreadsheets and late-night arguments. Yet if the question is not who has the greater mythology, but who has demonstrated the broadest, longest, most all-encompassing mastery of professional basketball, the evidence points—steadily, numerically, inexorably—toward LeBron James.

James scores on this three-point shot in the first half against New Orleans forward Zion Williamson on March 4, 2025.

JAMES
23
WILLIAMSON
1

CHAPTER 9

HOW LEBRON JAMES WILL BE REMEMBERED

THE LEGACY

When LeBron James (here in November 2023) finally retires from the game, he will leave as an overall statistical titan and having reshaped the NBA for a new generation of players.

JAMES
23

WHEN WILL LEBRON JAMES retire? As of early 2026, speculation centered on the expiration of his contract after the 2025–26 season. Yet as of March 2026, he has insisted that no final decision had been made. His focus remained on his next game, not on his last.

Perhaps this was LeBron's way of avoiding a farewell tour. Around the league, executives and opponents alike considered the conclusion of his 23rd NBA season as a reasonable endpoint for his unprecedented run of greatness. (Perfect, right? 23.)

Regardless of when it officially happens, LeBron has been clear that the end of his playing days is near. So what will his legacy be when he finally calls it a career?

The accomplishments of outstanding athletes are usually measured in seasons. King James's reign has lasted eras. LeBron's story does not fit neatly inside a box score or highlight reel. It's the tale of a teenage prodigy who became an elder statesman—and it's an epic.

To chronicle James' winding narrative is to chart the evolution of modern basketball itself. His development has mirrored what the sport has become—faster, more positionless, more global, more outspoken.

And each chapter has revealed a different version of LeBron. He started as the child of great promise. Then he rose, stumbled, redeemed, and conquered. The version of James that we witness today is a legend in full. He is a statistical titan, a stylistic revolutionary, and a cultural force.

When historians finally close the book, they will begin with the numbers, because the numbers are unavoidable. LeBron James will leave as the NBA's all-time leading scorer, the statistical Everest for a career that has stretched more than two decades and included 22 straight consecutive All-Star selections.

Along the way, he has amassed four championships, four Finals MVP awards, and four regular-season MVP trophies. He also reshaped basketball's positional map by redefining the "point-forward," blending elite scoring with playmaking until the distinction between guard and forward blurred into irrelevance. Because of LeBron, an entire generation of oversized ballhandlers has followed, from youth leagues to the pros.

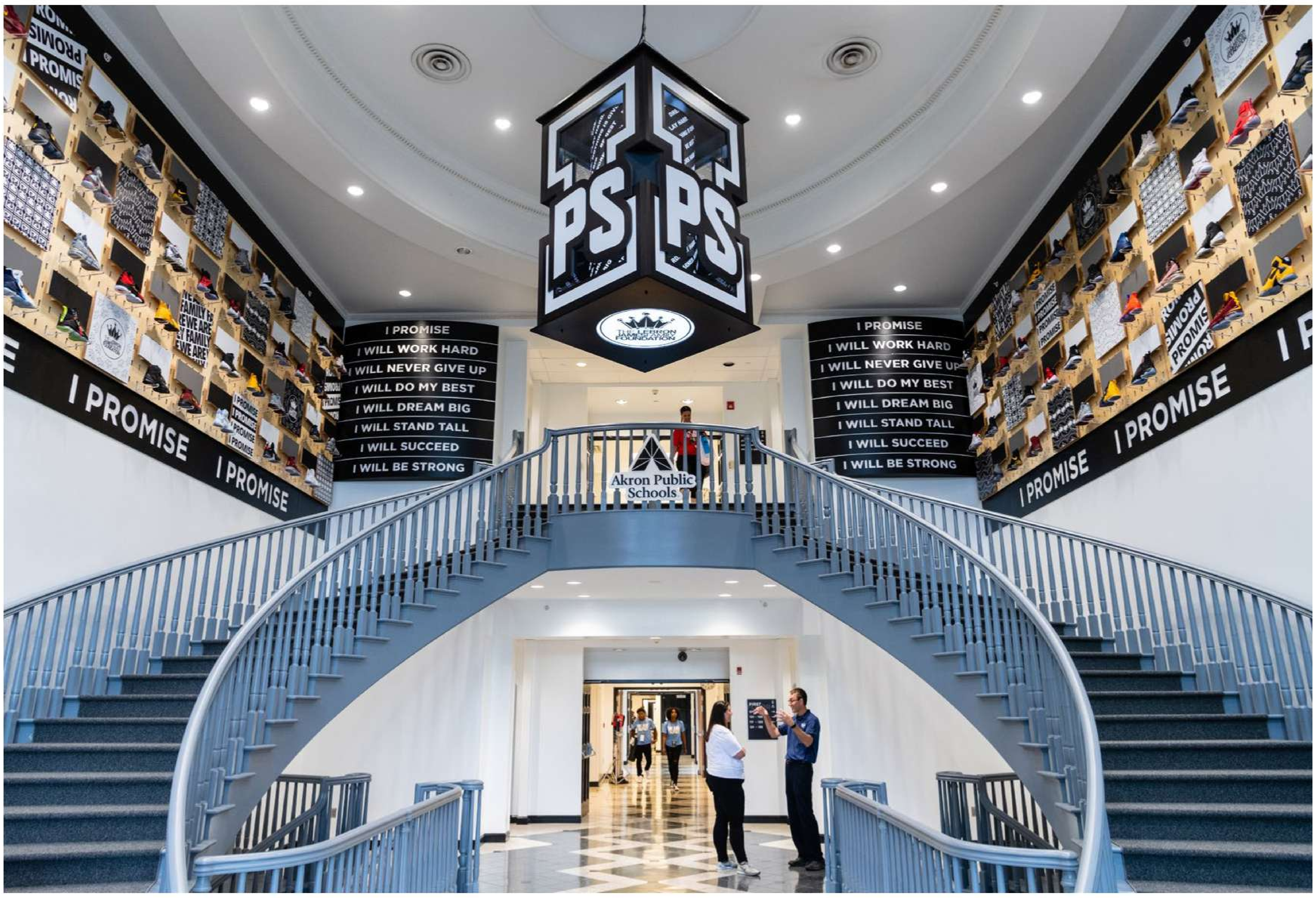
James also helped shift the league's power balance, normalizing player influence on where to play, and with whom. Changing uniforms was once considered a betrayal of loyalty. Now it's the standard of how rosters are built—players picking their teams rather than the other way around—in basketball and beyond.

James flies to the net for a dunk against Chicago during the first quarter of a Lakers-Bulls match-up on Jan. 26, 2026.

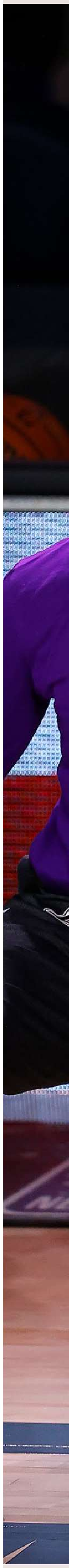
Off the floor, James has used his celebrity as a platform for putting more good in the world. He founded the I Promise School in Akron to support at-risk youth and co-founded initiatives such as More Than A Vote to encourage civic participation. He was also the first active NBA player to reach billionaire status, constructing a business portfolio that reimagined what an athlete was capable of away from sports.

Teammates often say LeBron James leaves every organization better than when he found it. This is praise that doubles as a thesis statement. Cleveland, Miami, Los Angeles—each stop has become a laboratory for reinvention. That pattern will likely define his legacy as much as any single championship run: He was not tied to one dynasty; he was the dynasty engine itself.

Still, the final verdict on his legacy will not be unanimous. Some will argue that others owned higher peaks or cleaner narratives. But has any player combined longevity, production, adaptability, and influence better than LeBron James? Kids who watched his rookie season in 2003 are now raising children who watched his 40th birthday season. In short, there are generations of basketball fans who



The I Promise School (above) is a partnership between the LeBron James Family Foundation and Akron Public Schools.



Right: Lakers teammates Anthony Davis, James, and Quinn Cook wear "Vote" shirts before a game against Denver on Sept. 22, 2020.

VOTE
VOTE
VOTE
purple
purple

crypto.com ARENA
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43,000 POINTS
LEBRON JAMES
LOS ANGELES LAKERS

12:00
4TH
LEBRON JAMES
43,000 POINTS
LAKERS
43,000

have never known an NBA without LeBron's towering presence.

He is the rare athlete who cannot be summarized in a single sentence or statistic. And it's entirely likely that the only reason why the monumental scale of his legacy is neither fully nor universally appreciated is because he's not done adding to it.

So enjoy watching LeBron James before he walks away. Because when it's over, we'll all realize that there was no one else like him. And we might never see his equal on a basketball court again in our lifetime.

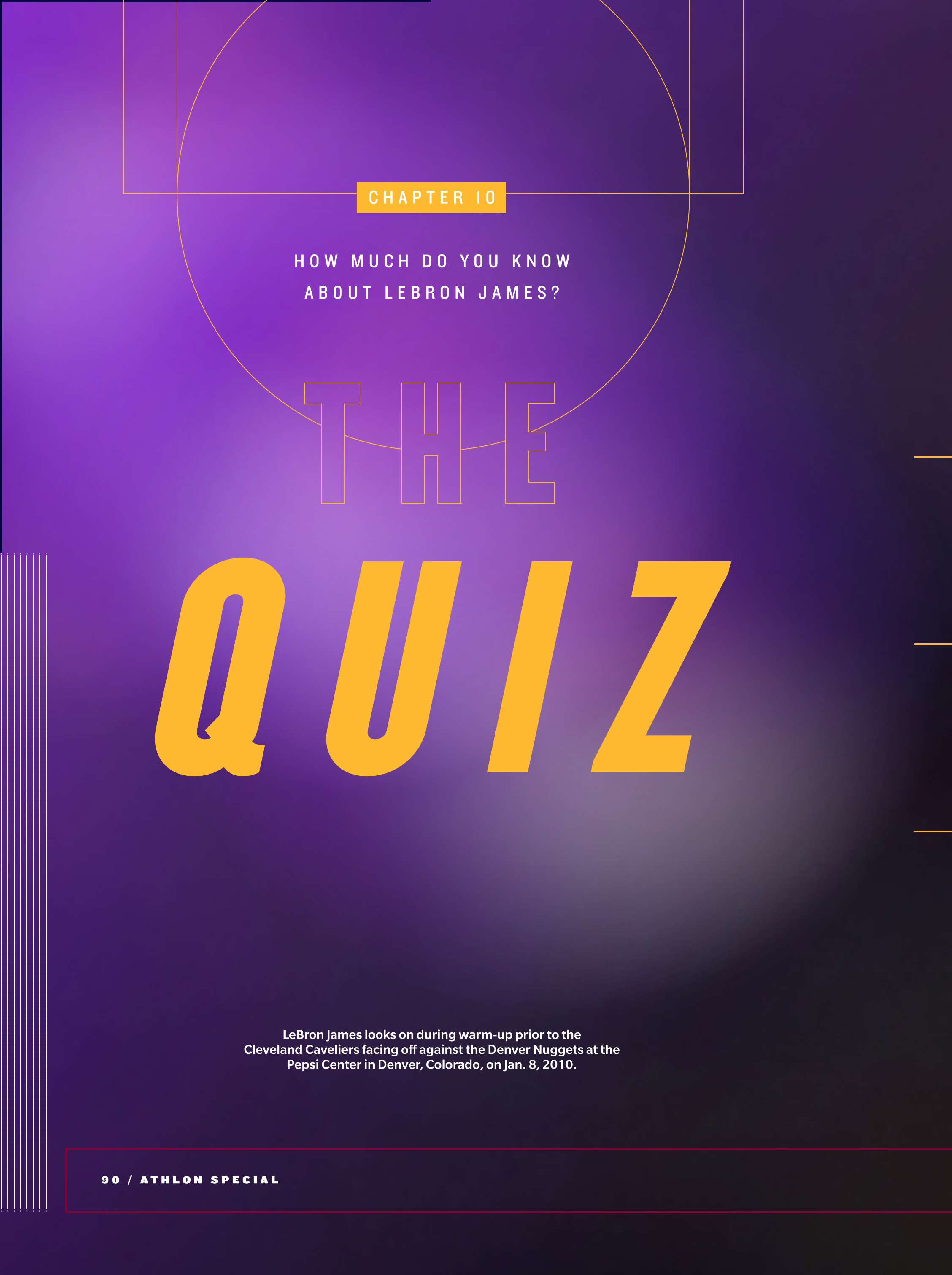
On Feb. 22, 2026, James (left) scored his 43,000th regular-season point in the second half of a game against the Celtics.

During the 75th NBA All-Star Game on Feb. 15, 2026, James (above, representing Team USA Stripes) tosses chalk in the air.

CHAPTER 10

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT LEBRON JAMES?

THE QUIZ



LeBron James looks on during warm-up prior to the Cleveland Caveliers facing off against the Denver Nuggets at the Pepsi Center in Denver, Colorado, on Jan. 8, 2010.

1. WHERE WAS LEBRON JAMES BORN?

A. Columbus, Ohio
B. Cleveland, Ohio
C. Akron, Ohio
D. Cincinnati, Ohio

2. WHERE DID LEBRON PLAY HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL?

A. Oak Hill Academy
B. St. Vincent–St. Mary High School
C. Archbishop Hoban High School
D. GlenOak High School

3. IN WHAT YEAR WAS JAMES DRAFTED FIRST OVERALL BY THE CLEVELAND CAVALIERS?

A. 2001
B. 2002
C. 2003
D. 2004

4. HOW MANY POINTS DID LEBRON SCORE IN HIS FIRST PROFESSIONAL GAME?

A. 18
B. 25
C. 31
D. 40

CLEVELAND
23

5. WHAT MEDAL DID LEBRON AND THE USA MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM WIN IN THE 2004 OLYMPICS?

A. Gold
B. Silver
C. None
D. Bronze

6. HOW MANY OF LEBRON'S FELLOW DRAFT CLASSMATES ARE STILL ACTIVE IN THE NBA?

A. 5
B. 3
C. 7
D. 0

7. WHAT WAS THE NICKNAME FOR LEBRON'S USA MEN'S BASKETBALL GOLD MEDAL-WINNING OLYMPIC TEAM IN 2008?

A. Dream Team II
B. Global Icons
C. Ballers
D. Redeem Team

8. WHAT HISTORIC STATISTICAL FEAT DID JAMES ACCOMPLISH DURING THE 2016 NBA FINALS?

A. Averaged a triple-double for the series
B. Led all players on both teams in points, rebounds, assists, steals, and blocks
C. Recorded back-to-back 50-point games
D. Shot 70% from the field

9. AGAINST WHICH NATION DID LEBRON RECORD THE FIRST OLYMPIC TRIPLE-DOUBLE IN U.S. MEN'S BASKETBALL HISTORY?

A. Spain
B. Lithuania
C. France
D. Australia

10

WHAT REMARKABLE SCORING RUN DID LEBRON DELIVER IN THE 2007 EASTERN CONFERENCE FINALS AGAINST DETROIT?

A. Hit 10 straight three-pointers

B. Scored 25 consecutive points for his team

C. Recorded a quadruple-double

D. Shot 100% for a half

11

WHICH HISTORIC AGE-BASED SCORING ACHIEVEMENT DID JAMES ACCOMPLISH IN 2005?

A. Youngest 40-point scorer

B. Youngest triple-double

C. Youngest player to score more than 55 points in a game

D. Youngest All-Star MVP

12. WHICH UNUSUAL FEAT DID LEBRON ACHIEVE DURING THE 2017–18 SEASON?

A. Led league in minutes at age 40
B. Played every playoff minute
C. Played all 82 regular-season games
D. Never fouled out

13. WHAT WAS THE ONLY SEASON LEBRON LED THE NBA IN ASSISTS?

A. 2007–08
B. 2010–11
C. 2019–20
D. 2023–24

14. IN FEBRUARY 2026, LEBRON BECAME THE OLDEST PLAYER IN NBA HISTORY TO DO THIS:

A. Record a triple-double
B. 10 consecutive double-doubles
C. Score 50 points in a game
D. Win All-Star Game MVP

15. WHAT RARE DEFENSIVE DISTINCTION BELONGS TO LEBRON AMONG ALL QUALIFIED PLAYOFF PARTICIPANTS?

A. Only Cavalier or Heat player with 200 blocks
B. Only small forward in the top 10 all-time for playoff blocks
C. Most blocks in Finals history
D. Most blocks in a single postseason

16. HOW MANY TOTAL OLYMPIC ASSISTS DOES LEBRON JAMES HAVE, AN AMERICAN RECORD?

A. 98
B. 121
C. 139
D. 182

17. WHICH TWO OLYMPICS DID LEBRON SIT OUT TO PRIORITIZE HEALTH AND LONGEVITY?

A. 2008 and 2012
B. 2016 and 2020
C. 2012 and 2016
D. 2004 and 2008

18. WHICH DEFENSIVE CATEGORY DOES LEBRON HOLD THE PLAYOFF RECORD FOR?

A. Most defensive rebounds in playoff history
B. Highest post-season rebounds per game average
C. Most total steals in playoff history
D. Highest post-season steals per game average

19. WHICH CAREER-LONGEVITY BENCHMARK DID JAMES SURPASS BY JAN. 28, 2026?

A. 50,000 regular-season minutes
B. 55,000 regular-season minutes
C. 60,000 regular-season minutes
D. 70,000 regular-season minutes

20. WHICH OF THESE PLAYOFF RECORDS DOES JAMES HOLD?

A. Most Finals triple-doubles
B. Most playoff wins in NBA history
C. Most Finals Game 7 wins
D. Most playoff buzzer-beaters in a season

21. HOW MANY CONSECUTIVE NBA FINALS APPEARANCES DID LEBRON JAMES MAKE BETWEEN 2011 AND 2018?

A. 2

B. 4

C. 8

D. 5

22. WITH HOW MANY DIFFERENT TEAMS DID LEBRON JAMES WIN A CHAMPIONSHIP?

A. 3

B. 2

C. 1

D. 4

23. WHICH RARE STATISTICAL CLUB IS LEBRON THE ONLY NBA PLAYER TO JOIN?

A. Lead the league in steals per game

B. 100 points scored in a game

C. 10,000+ points, rebounds, and assists

D. Triple-double averages for a season

24. LEBRON WAS THE FIRST PLAYER IN LEAGUE HISTORY TO SCORE 40 POINTS AGAINST EVERY TEAM IN THE LEAGUE. WHICH FRANCHISE WAS THE LAST TO FALL?

A. Los Angeles Lakers

B. Boston Celtics

C. Brooklyn Nets

D. Los Angeles Clippers

25. WHAT RARE VERSATILITY MILESTONE HAS LEBRON ACHIEVED?

A. Guarding all five positions in a single quarter

B. Starting at every position during his career

C. Leading the league in field-goal percentage as a guard

D. Recording a quintuple-double

26. WHAT WAS THE ONLY SEASON LEBRON LED THE LEAGUE IN SCORING?

A. 2005–06

B. 2021–22

C. 2007–08

D. 2009–10

27. WHICH RARE CHAMPIONSHIP DISTINCTION BELONGS TO LEBRON ALONE?

A. Winning titles in three decades

B. Winning Finals MVP with three different franchises

C. Winning MVP in three different decades

D. Winning championships as a rookie

28. WHAT ALL-NBA ACHIEVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS JAMES' SUSTAINED EXCELLENCE ACROSS ERAS?

A. Most All-Time Regular-Season Assists

B. Only player with All-NBA honors as a rookie

C. Most All-NBA selections in league history

D. Most All-NBA Defensive selections

29. WHICH LONGEVITY RECORD UNDERSCORES JAMES' UNPRECEDENTED CONSISTENCY?

A. Most seasons played

B. Most consecutive double-digit scoring games in NBA history

C. Most games played

D. Both A and B

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THE QUIZ

30

WHAT HISTORIC SCORING MILESTONE CROWNS HIS STATISTICAL RÉSUMÉ?

A. First player with 40,000 career points

B. Only player with 10 scoring titles and 10 rings

C. First player ever to surpass 50,000 combined regular-season and playoff points

D. Both A and C

ANSWERS: 1.C, 2.B, 3.C, 4.B, 5.D, 6.D, 7.D, 8.B, 9.D, 10.B, 11.C, 12.C, 13.C, 14.A, 15.B, 16.C, 17.B, 18.C, 19.C, 20.B, 21.C, 22.A, 23.C, 24.D, 25.B, 26.C, 27.B, 28.C, 29.D, 30.D

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“ALL YOUR LIFE THEY WILL SAY YOU’RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH OR STRONG ENOUGH OR TALENTED ENOUGH.... THEY WILL TELL YOU NO. A THOUSAND TIMES NO. UNTIL ALL THE NO’S BECOME MEANINGLESS.”

—LEBRON JAMES